

Online Mediation during Covid19 Restrictions Information for Clients

Due to Covid19 pandemic social distancing measures we are not able to provide in person mediation sessions currently. We are, however, able to offer mediation online using the Zoom video conferencing platform. Zoom is free for you to access. It can be downloaded from the internet, and it is easy to install and set up.

How does the process work?

Each family member is offered an individual, confidential meeting where information is shared and options are discussed. This appointment, called an intake meeting, takes place by telephone. If mediation is appropriate, and clients would like to use Zoom as a way of taking part in joint meetings, a Zoom test preparation meeting is arranged with your mediator.

Clients need to have:

- access to a private confidential space
- a laptop, PC, tablet or smartphone – most new computers now have built in cameras, microphones and speakers, but for clarity of sound clients may wish to consider the use of headphones
- downloaded the Zoom software or Zoom app

Clients are asked to provide us with their email address and a mutually convenient date and time is scheduled so that a Zoom test preparation meeting can be arranged with a member of the staff team. This is to ensure that we are able to connect and to check that the picture clarity and sound is of sufficient quality for a joint mediation session. We send clients an invitation to the meeting via email, and they then just need to click on the link to join the session. Clients initially see a message that invites them to the 'waiting room' and we then admit them to the meeting. This is to ensure confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Additional measures are implemented for Zoom mediation to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to maintain confidentiality. Clients who have taken part in their individual intake appointment by telephone are emailed their client registration form and asked to read and confirm by email that they have understood and will adhere to the confidentiality statement. In addition, all clients who take part in mediation via Zoom are asked to read and confirm that they have understood and adhere to the policy in relation to mediation conducted via Zoom. This documentation must be returned to us by email prior to mediation taking place.

At the beginning of each joint mediation session clients will also be asked to confirm that no one else is present in the room. It is particularly important that children are not in the room or able to overhear discussions. They will also be asked to confirm that they will not record (audio, video or otherwise) any part of the session, take any still photographs or attempt to contact the other party via any means of private messaging system during the session.

The way in which we use Zoom protects confidentiality, although we are not able to guarantee this absolutely as we are using a third party provider.

The Zoom Mediation Session

A mutually convenient date and time is arranged between the parties and the mediator(s). In order to ensure the safety of clients, parties will be required to enter the session via a 'waiting room'. Once both clients have entered the session the meeting is 'locked'. This prevents any other parties from entering or having access to the session. Zoom has an option for breakout rooms which allows clients to have a break within the session where this is desired or deemed helpful.

Zoom mediation sessions usually last 1 to 1½ hours, and parties may take part in several appointments to explore options and agree an acceptable way forward. The number and frequency of appointments can be tailored to suit your needs to ensure that they are able to work through their difficulties at a pace that feels manageable.

As mediation is a neutral and impartial process that supports clients to reach their own decisions great care is taken to ensure that parties are offered an equitable service. If parties choose to mediate via Zoom then both clients will be responsible for ensuring a safe and confidential space.

Equal Opportunities and Ethics

We are committed to the promotion of equal opportunities in all our work. All our family mediators abide by Relationships Scotland's Code of Professional Conduct. Zoom mediation was developed in recognition of the barriers which some clients encounter in being able to access appropriate services in a timely fashion, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic. Zoom mediation aims to provide services for families irrespective of their geographic location and their personal and financial circumstances.

Points to Remember

- Do not pass on your Zoom invite or password.
- Make sure no one else is in the room or can overhear, particularly children.
- Make sure there is nothing private or sensitive in the background of your screen.
- Should the mediator be logged out of the session due to a technical glitch, please leave the meeting immediately.
- Do not record any sessions (by audio video or otherwise).
- Do not contact the other party by any private messaging systems.
- Allow 1-1½ hours for the mediation session, and 15 minutes for a Zoom test preparation meeting beforehand